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Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Second session
New York, 12-23 May 2003
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Theme of the session: "Indigenous children and youth"

High-level panel and dialogue on indigenous children and youth

Note by the Secretariat

Background

1. At its first session, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues expressed its attention to make indigenous children and youth a focal point of its work in the years to come. The Forum addressed various recommendations to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other monitoring bodies.[1]

2. Important policy initiatives and events focusing on the indigenous child are being planned for 2003. A day of general discussion is being planned by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on 19 September 2003. UNICEF is currently preparing a digest on the indigenous child, scheduled to be published in the latter part of 2003. UNICEF is also preparing a number of case studies aimed at understanding development programming to fulfil the rights of indigenous children. At the regional level, at the Ibero-American summit to be held in fall 2003, special focus will be placed on the indigenous child.

Objective

3. The Forum will convene a high-level panel and dialogue on indigenous children and youth on 12 May 2003 to stimulate further discussion and analysis within the Forum, the United Nations system, Governments, indigenous people's organizations, non-governmental organizations and others. The discussion is also expected to inform the consideration of the other agenda items of the second session of the Forum so that recommendations can be formulated taking into account the human rights and needs of indigenous children and youth.

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Format

4. The composition of the panel will include Nina Pacari Vega, Foreign Minister of Ecuador, UNICEF, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, an indigenous youth and Ida Nicolaisen, Member of the Forum with portfolio for children and youth. The panel will be chaired by the Chairperson of the Forum. Representation of United Nations Member States at the level of permanent representatives will be encouraged. After the introductory statements of the panellists, a dialogue will take place with Forum members as well as observers representing United Nations Member States, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, indigenous peoples' organizations and non-governmental organizations. A Chairman's summary of the panel will be prepared and submitted to the Forum and observers.

Substantive framework of the panel and dialogue

5. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries and ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, as well as other relevant instruments, constitute the normative foundation on which policies and programmes on indigenous children and youth should be based. Moreover, important global conferences and their follow-up (World Summit for Children, Millennium Summit, World Summit on Sustainable Development and others) provide an additional policy framework. The panel will address the following main questions:

- What are the main challenges faced by indigenous children today (for example, issues of discrimination, poverty, environmental hazards, child labour, health care, education, cultural rights, substance abuse, forced removals)?
- What are some good examples of approaches to solutions at the national/local levels, as well as at the regional/subregional and international levels?
- How should the rights of indigenous children and youth be better promoted and protected? How should development programmes for indigenous children and youth be enhanced at the international and national levels? What types of action are needed in legislation, policies and budgets? What positive role can the media play in that direction? How can the Forum, United Nations mechanisms, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental, indigenous peoples' and non-governmental organizations strengthen their contribution to the improvement of the lives of indigenous children and youth?

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 23* (E/2003/43/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Corr.1), chap. I, sect. B, para. 31.